

AUSTRALIA

Geography: Australia is smallest, youngest continent, with the lowest population density. It is often said that Australia lies at the edge of the world, divided from other continents by long distances. Australia is located south-east of Asia. The Indian Ocean is west and the south Pacific (Coral and Tasmania Leas) is east. Tasmania lies 240 km south. Nearest is Indonesia, Papua New Guinea on north, Solomon, Fiji and New Zealand are on east. Its area is 7.7 million sq. k. Australia is an island continent. The Great Dividing Range along the eastern coast (The Australian Alps) has the highest Australian mountain, Mt. Kosciusko. The western plateau rises to 607 m with arid areas in the Great Sandy and Great Victoria Deserts. The north-east have heavy rainfalls (it is an area often visited by destructive hurricanes) and Cape York Peninsula has jungles. Rivers that flow permanently are to be found only in the north, east, and in Tasmania. The Murray Rivers flows from New South Wales to the Indian Ocean, the second longest river is the Darling. There are three big lakes here: Lake Eyre, Lake Torrens and Lake Gairdner. The Australian climate varies from warm to subtropical. Australia has summer when we have winter and vice versa. The tropical forests in the north and north-east are displaced by savannah or grassland. The south-east is covered with forests of eucalyptus and other evergreen trees. The animals of Australia are numerous and some of them, like the kangaroo, koala bear, dingo, platypus, Tasmanian devil or barking lizards can't be found elsewhere.

People: The population of Australia is some 16 million. Around 85% people live in urban areas mainly along the south-east coast. Deserts and the tropical northern part are predictably uninhabited. 95% of inhabitants are of British origin, 3% are made by other European ethnic groups and 1.5% are aborigines. Australian English and aboriginal languages are spoken here.

History: People lived there at a Stone Age level. They did not know of how to work the soil nor how to rear livestock. They had no plants suitable for cultivation and no original Australian animals were suitable for domestication. Thus, the Australians never became farmers or herdsmen. They made their tools and weapons only of wood and stone. The sole source of food was hunting and gathering. Men used to catch birds, snakes, crocodiles, and women with children used to pick fruits, caterpillars, ants, eggs and dig for roots. The dingo wild dog was the sole animal that became domesticated. The Australians were divided into about 650 tribes that spoke about 500 different languages. Each tribe usually had its own dialect, name and customs, its own territory and hunting grounds. Captain James Cook explored the eastern coast in 1770 when the continent was inhabited by a variety of different tribes. It became a convict colony in the 18th century when immigration increased because gold was found here. The Commonwealth was proclaimed in 1901.

National Economy: Main industries are iron, steel, textiles, electrical equipment, chemicals, cars, aircraft, ship and machinery. Australia belongs to the top exporters of beef, lamb, wool and wheat, although only 9% of land is arable. Other agricultural items are barley, oats, hay, sugar, wine, fruit and vegetables. Natural riches contain mainly bauxite, coal, copper, iron, lead, nickel, silver, tin, uranium and zinc ores. Among the main trading partners belong Japan, the USA, the UK, New Zealand. Currency used in Australia is the Australian Dollar. In Australia there are many big cities. Sydney is the oldest. Brisbane is the third largest. Adelaide lies in the southern part of the country. There are two universities and a car-manufacturing factory here. Melbourne is one of the most beautiful cities. There are a lot of

museums, galleries and parks. Perth is an important industrial city. Other important cities are Darwin, Alice Springs and Hobart.

Government type and administration:The official title is The Commonwealth of Australia and it is a British dominion. It has a democratic, federal system and the head of state is Queen Elizabeth II. represented by the Governor – General. The head of government is the Prime Minister. The Commonwealth of Australia consists of six states: New South Wales (capital Sydney), Victoria (Melbourne), Queensland (Brisbane), South Australia (Adelaide), Western Australia (Perth), Tasmanian (Hobart) and two territories: The Australian Capital Territory (a part of the country surrounding Australia’s capital Canberra) and Northern Territory (thinly populated).

The Federal Parliament has its seat in Canberra and is divided into the Senate and the House of Representatives. Australia is a member of the important international organisations: UN, OECD and the Commonwealth.

NEW ZEALAND

Geography:New Zealand consists of two large islands (North and South Island) in south-west Pacific Ocean Nearest are Australia (on west), Fiji, Tonga on north. Its area is about 269 000 sq. km. Each of two main islands is mainly hilly and mountainous, the highest peak is Mount Cook (3764 m). The coast consists of fertile plains, especially the large Canterbury Plains on South Island. A volcanic plateau is in the centre of North Island. South Island has glaciers and 15% peaks over 3 000 m. The climate is quite pleasant. There is a lot of sun and it often rains there. Summers are not too hot and the winters are mild.

People:Population is about 3.3 million people. 83% of the whole population live in urban areas. 85% of people are of European (above all British) origin and about 9% are Polynesian. Officially English is spoken here but some people still speak Maori.

History:The Maoris, a Polynesian group from the eastern Pacific, reached New Zealand before and during the 14th century. Captain James Cook explored the coasts in about 18th century. British sovereignty was proclaimed in 1840 and the colony became a dominion in 1907. Now it is an independent member of the Commonwealth.

National Economy:Food processing, textiles, machinery and forest industry are the main industries. Only 2% of land is arable and the main crop is grain. New Zealand is rich in oil, gas, iron ore and coal. The main trading partners of New Zealand are the USA, Australia, Japan and Great Britain.

Government type and administration:New Zealand has a parliamentary system where the head of state is Queen Elizabeth II represented by the Governor – General. The head of government is the Prime Minister. Elections take place every three years. The country is divided into counties. The capital is Wellington, other big cities are Manukau, Christchurch and Auckland. New Zealand is member of UN, OECD and the Commonwealth.

The flag consists of the British Union Jack in the left upper corner and four red stars in the Southern Cross constellation.